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WIL Highlights for Dagmar Boggs, President of The Coca-Cola Company 7-Eleven Global Customer Team

“Successful Women Don’t Run from Change: They Run Toward It”

Looking for an executive with deep global customer and commercial leadership experience - and with specialties in strategic planning, sustainability, supply chain, and customer analytics? Well, look no further than this month’s WIL

speaker, Dagmar Boggs, a Coca-Cola executive who is the President of the 7-Eleven Global Customer Team. She’s also the perfect person to discuss how to adapt to constant change, both professionally and personally.

She began her self-described “rocky road but magnificent” story by commenting on her name. “Dagmar is German,” she said. “My immigrant parents gave my siblings and me German names, even though they’re ‘Barbara and Harold!’ Go figure!”

Continuing on her topic, “Successful Women Don’t Run from Change: They Run Toward It,” Dagmar shared a plethora of experiences, insights and lessons learned. Here are some highlights.

- **Life is full of change.** Dagmar became a single parent after her husband passed away. As a working single mother, she knew she needed more flexibility / less travel in her life and **she found her voice** to ask for exactly that.
- Sometimes **“necessity equals courage.”** Had to change her belief system. Given her circumstances, she wasn’t going to be a “traditional” mother. Felt guilty but she began to study herself through introspection.
- **“Guilt is a useless emotion.”** The truth is, I’m different (from some mothers.). I love to work and I love my children very much. I became good with my own perspective.” A nanny helped her manage family and work as well. And at one point she told her daughter very explicitly that she loved her very much – but that she also found work meaningful and important.
- She accepted a position as an executive assistant (no travel) and learned a lot about business politics. At the same time, it allowed her to stabilize both personally and professionally.
- While learning from her staff role, Dagmar also realized that - for career progression – she wanted **P & L experience** and she began interviewing.

- She was selected for a very big leadership position --VP of Coca-Cola's Global Burger King Customer. Soon **self-doubt** entered the picture, i.e., the "**inner critic**" or "the village idiot" as Dagmar refers to it.
- "**Feeling like I wasn't ready or good enough ...for many women, that's a common feeling at times.**" And in fact, in the first 3 months of her new job, Dagmar said she "crashed and burned."
- But her voice of reason kicked in, and she recognized that she wasn't solely responsible for the lack of success in negotiations. She doubled-down and learned exactly what she needed to know about fierce negotiations on the international level and over the next 3 years, she won them all! "**Mistakes aren't defining, how you get back up from them is.**"
- She also developed an important, but simple mantra: "**I'm capable of learning anything and I can be successful at this role.**" It requires mental discipline but it's liberating and quite powerful.
- Your inner critic is only one voice and while it can be valuable at times, it shouldn't dominate. **Use your "inner mentor"; it is wiser than you can imagine.**" Today her inner voice grounds her in challenges; she trusts herself.
- About deciding to go for her EMBA at Emory's Goizueta School of Business: she actually turned down a promotion into what is her current job when it was first offered in order to start the program. "I wanted to build community outside Coke and keep my skills contemporary."
- Clearly, she was successful, AND, ironically, 10 months later, she got the promotion and the 7-Eleven President's job! "**I was good AND lucky,**" Dagmar said.
- On the subject of gender inequality in the workplace, she referred to a WSJ article. It said that only "1 in 10 men" believe that gender inequality still exists and 1/3 of women agree. Dagmar acknowledges that there are both internal and external barriers in the workplace for women – as well as generational and societal issues and differences.
- The last thing she shared was a college essay written by her teenage daughter. In it, her daughter proudly describes her mom (Dagmar) as a "**multidimensional woman and role model,**" and she applauds her "**mommy magic.**"

Now THAT is a great way to end any story!!